

Indian Leadership Education and Development (I LEAD)

Abstract

American Indian administrators in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Dakota are not representative of the numbers of Native Americans in these states. There are 104 schools in Montana alone that have populations of 25% or more American Indian students. To place at least one American Indian administrator in each of these schools, 82 American Indian administrators would need to be recruited, trained and placed in schools serving American Indian students. These statistics are similar in the surrounding Northern Plains states. The primary goal of this project is to recruit, educate, certify, install and induct 25 American Indian educators into school leadership positions with the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to facilitate school improvement and student achievement in schools on or near the Indian reservations in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota.

The I LEAD project, a partnership between Montana State University (MSU) and Little Big Horn Tribal College (LBHC), provides American Indian educators with access to graduate education tailored to meet the contextualized needs of rural and isolated schools with high proportions of American Indian students. Its unique focus in providing an authentic context for leadership instruction demonstrates another aspect of the program's significance – potentially improving reservation schools while educating their next generation of leaders. All completers of the project will complete a graduate degree, Educational Specialist or Masters of Education, in educational leadership from MSU.

It was designed: (1) to provide a rigorous program integrating the Professional Educational Standards of Leadership (PESL) standards-based instruction with authentic activities focused on improving public schools; (2) to establish a variety of high quality delivery methods

that integrate the experiences of university scholars, tribal elders, tribal college faculty, and school leadership practitioners serving in schools where a significant proportion of the students are American Indian; and (3) to establish networks of support that serve participants from their recruitment into the project, to mastery of their role as a school principal. At the center, collaboration at all levels of the project is essential.

In the recruiting phase, Montana State University and Little Big Horn College will collaborate and use their networks of relationships to publicize the program. During the instructional phase, the instructional teams, state level Indian Education experts, tribal members and local school officials and faculty members at Little Big Horn College and Montana State University will collaborate to link instruction with authentic school improvement activities. In the placement phase, collaboration among a network of mentors, instructional team members and advisory board members will assist with the successful placement of candidates by providing leads to administrative openings and by promoting the candidates to the appropriate selection officials Superintendents of several LEAs have committed to considering and potentially hiring project completers. In the induction phase, collaboration among district leaders hiring I LEAD graduates, mentors, and university faculty and professional networks provide support during the initial year in an administrative position to facilitate success.